"Environmental Sustainability? We Don't Have That Here": Freetown Christiania as an Unintentional Eco-village

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Abstract

How did an urban squat come to be termed as an eco-village, and why would this car-free town reject a bicycle path? This article brings pressing urban and environmental issues together through a case study of "Freetown Christiania", a squatter community located in downtown Copenhagen. With a framework based on Helga Leitner *et al*. urban neoliberal contestations, I identify Christiania's alternative socio-spatial imaginaries and practices. Ethnographic field work conducted while living at the community's researcher house allows for an in-depth exploration of Christiania's recent history and experiences, and the implications for conventional conceptions of and pathways to sustainability. I show how some of the values and practices found in Christiania differ from the "green" priorities of Copenhagen's carbon neutral goal. My findings show resistance to the dominant discourse of sustainability, for example through a temporal focus on the present as opposed to the conventional considerations for future generations; and with resistance to Christianshavnruten, a proposed bicycle path that would cut through Christiania. The town's dedication to self-expression, consensus decision making, and collective ownership, allow for considerations on how urban citizens reclaim their everyday spaces.

Introduction

This article will discuss Europe's oldest and largest squatted settlement, Freetown Christiania, in Copenhagen (Denmark), and the puzzle which emerges when one learns that their title as an 'eco-village' was not gained through intentional sustainability planning. By using Helga Leitner *et al*. (2007) concept of urban neoliberal contestations, I shed light on Christiania's alternative socio-spatial imaginaries and practices, and the implications for urban sustainability. This perspective is based on social and cultural change, as opposed to the managerial techno-fix approach that dominates sustainability discussions. Christiania provides critical insight to studies of cities and the environment, as it defies typical planning processes and does not 'fit' the conventional idea of an intentional eco-village, nor does it comply with prevailing 'green' or 'smart' city standards. This ultimately questions the role of intentionality and temporality in sustainability, while demonstrating the tensions of a hybrid space.

Through this inquiry I address contemporary issues that are relevant to community activists as much as policy makers. This case study comes at a time when environmental sustainability integration and concern for climate change is growing on urban political agendas. For example Copenhagen has both a Climate Adaptation Plan and a green action plan with a goal to become the 'world's first carbon neutral capital by 2025', reflecting the prioritization of lowering CO_2 in cities, what Andrew Jonas *et al*. (2011) refer to as 'carbon control.' Similarly, Erik Swyngedouw (2013, 13) writes that CO_2 has been fetishized and commodified, where its ecological process has been reduced to an object "around which our environmental dreams, aspirations, contestations, as well as policies crystallize." In conjunction with carbon control policies is a municipal level interest in designing new sustainable neighborhoods, such as Copenhagen's Nordhavn. The energy-centered, green-branded vision for this area is that "Nordhavn must enhance Copenhagen's identity as an eco-metropolis. Renewable energy, new forms of energy supply, optimum use of resources and environmentally friendly modes of transport must all help to make Nordhavn a pioneering neighbourhood for sustainable urban development" (By & Havn, 2015). These local level, top-down sustainability plans, such as Nordhavn, represent a political drive to construct energy-efficient built environments, while simultaneously seeking to secure Copenhagen's global title as a center for expert 'green' knowledge.

In contrast to the above approach, Christiania was built from 'the bottom,' to create an alternative social environment. While a member of the Danish Eco-village Network (LØS) and the Global Eco-village Network (GEN), Christiania's foundational values differ from intentional eco-villages and sustainable neighborhoods, as I will explain in this article. I will look at how this squat came to be understood as an eco-village, and the implications for conventional understandings of planning for sustainability. By interrogating this perspective, I show how, through their community-oriented values, often expressed in the short term, Christiania offers fresh insight to a plural vision of sustainability, from not

only their values but also their tactics. The socio-spatial temporality of Christiania, foremost as a squat, forcefully uproots the common understanding of sustainability as a long-term goal.

My concern is not to place Christiania into any 'eco-village' or 'green' city boxes; rather my intention is to demonstrate the plural notions of sustainability that arise from this particular squat. This article contributes to critical views on sustainability, accepting that systemic changes to current unjust, exploitative political-economic structures are required for such a transition. What follows is a conceptual framework based on urban neoliberal contestations, and a brief outline of methodological concerns. I then continue with a background of Christiania's history, and introduce their recent (2012) purchase of the land. I offer insight to their alternative values and practices, and elaborate on one contestation in particular, their resistance to Christianshavnruten, the City of Copenhagen's proposed bicycle path. I conclude with a discussion on what these contestations imply for urban sustainability.

Conceptual Framework

Urban neoliberal contestations as a concept responds to the increasing neoliberalization of urban spaces, where cities are used as 'growth machines.' The priority of deregulation and economic development leaves socio-environmental issues lagging behind. As cities "have become central spaces where the hegemonic struggles over neoliberalism are now being fought" (Leitner *et al*., 2007, 21), it is imperative to document these struggles, as they may offer alternatives to the current political economic system. This perspective requires us to look at root problems and understand cities as a part and product of this system. In his pivotal work David Harvey (1989, 11) writes that the focus of "urban governance has thus become much more oriented to the provision of a 'good business climate' and to the construction of all sorts of lures to bring capital into town," contributing to a vulnerable urban environment. By this I mean the everyday lives of citizens have become more influenced by global market trends and crises; rather than an inward focus of a locally sustained economy.

Helga Leitner *et al*. (2007, 5) describe the notion of neoliberal contestations as a "vast variety of imaginaries and practices of all political hues that not only practice resistance but also are resilient to and rework neoliberalism." Rather than centering on how neoliberalism is performed in cities, this concept allows for a deeper understanding of these contestations and places them at the fore. Leitner *et al*. (2007, 320-322) illuminate four types of trajectories associated with contestations. These initiatives may be *engaged*, by cooperating (sometimes leading to cooptation) with "neoliberal corporate and institutional power"; display *opposition* ("local collective action"); *produce alternative knowledge* by "disseminating alternative interpretations, facts, and arguments"; and/or create "spaces within which alternative practices can be pursued in their own right and on their own terms" using "nonmarket forms of organization" through *disengagement*.

Contestations to urban neoliberalism may use a combination of these trajectories and involve several actors. Not only are alternative practices important, but also ideas, both conceptualized as locally and historically embedded, thus overall varied in their form, networks, and outcomes.

In particular regard for sustainability, Helga Leitner *et al.* (2007, 12) write that these contestations may include "visions of ecology that emphasize care for the environment rather than exploitation of natural resources, translating into struggles to protect and/or decommodify resources and environments." Such contestations can be expected to rework neoliberal, capitalist, consumerist structures and cultures. The contestations from Christiania can be placed into the broader intersection of urban sustainability and environmental politics, for example, within the context of Copenhagen's attempt to become 'carbon neutral.'

There are two crucial points of departure through which we can understand this case. I will continue to build on these premises through this case study, in order to interrogate dominant notions of urban sustainability. The first has been raised in previous accounts from Alberto Vanolo (2012; see also Coppola and Vanolo, 2015), asserting that Christiania should be understood as a "hybrid" space and their autonomy "fractured." That is to say, in order to continue, Christiania operates within a broader social system governed by typical state institutions and often makes compromises with such institutions. The second and related concern is that there is not one understanding of Christiania or what it means to be a Christianite, especially considering that Christiania's population has been attracted to the town for perhaps more diverse reasons than what one may expect in comparison to an intentional community. Further, this is not to postulate a strict dichotomy between Christiania and Copenhagen, nor should one infer that neoliberalism stops at Christiania's borders. To use these concerns as departure points and understand how Christiania at times contests urban neoliberalism, rather than to count carbon or search for technological efficiencies, I employ a qualitative approach.

Urban Ethnography

As an observer-participant, I gained insight to everyday life in Christiania through urban ethnographic methods, as Richard Ocejo (2013, 4) explains, one should take "the larger forces of urban life into account… recognize the importance of the city, its political economy, inequalities, cultures, and conditions of size, density, and diversity in the lives of their participants." I lived in a house established for researchers in March 2014, as part of their Christiania Researcher in Residence Project (CRIR, crir.net), where my conversations and participant observation resulted in field notes which were transcribed daily, along with a photographic summary (175 photographs taken). Due to the informal social atmosphere, I did not record any interviews. In the following months I lived in Copenhagen, thus I was able to make many return visits to Christiania. I complemented this ethnographic data with documents and media from both Copenhagen and Christiania, as well as a review of relevant literature on

Christiania. One could argue that Christiania is too obvious of a case selection to understand urban neoliberal contestations; however, within the context of sustainability we are able to see this case in a new light which provides a strong, seemingly counterintuitive response to present sustainability discourses.

Emmerik, a member of the CRIR committee and resident of Christiania since 1974, picked me up from the Christianshavn metro station in his Christiania bike. I eagerly peered from the cargo box, cycling through the infamous Pusher Street we literally stopped to smell the hash: "earthy," I uttered as I tried to smile at the masked pusher. And on we went, the scenery changing from a bustling town with smells of hash and fried foods to a calmer neighborhood of Mælkebøtten. With stacks of wood around every corner (see Figure 1) and a change of smells I quickly learned that the conventional method of heating homes is through wood burning. We arrived at the CRIR house (Figure 2), originally a military storage area for grenades and as Emmerik would later explain, and what seemed to be the norm, is that improvements to the house were incremental – i.e.: when enough money is saved, a shower or toilet or stove is added. The house is now a collection of second hand items with traces of past researchers and a small library of documents, books and movies about Christiania.

Figure 1: Cut down trees for firewood

Figure 2: The CRIR house

Given that Christiania is deemed an urban eco-village and self-titled as the "green lungs of Copenhagen," (Christiania Guide, 2005, 2) I went in search of anyone who could talk to me about environmental sustainability. I also knew that the town had hosted a 'Climate Bottom Meeting' during COP 15, making it an important space for the global climate justice movement (Chatterton *et al.,* 2013; Mason, 2013). Yet I was met with "environmental sustainability… what is that?" My explanation was often met with: "we don't have that here;" "most people here are too poor to care about the environment;" and "our dirt is toxic because of the military weapons." This article then attempts to understand how Christiania is viewed as an eco-village without sustainability plans or environmental indicators – spatially in stark and direct contrast to Copenhagen's global goal to become the world's first carbon neutral capital.

From Social Experiment to Eco-Village

Christiania is divided into 14 neighborhoods and contains a variety of physical landscapes, from a lively town with Pusher Street, shops and bars to a rural scenery with horses, canoeing and overgrown flora.   An   outsider's   first impression may be reminiscent of a village in a 'developing' country, with dirt paths and wood burning stoves; their efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle derived perhaps more so from poverty rather than ecological dedication. This physical landscape has been decided upon through neighborhood meetings.

Christiania's over 40 year history is as fluid, dramatic and diverse as its population. Located on abandoned military barracks, close to the center of Copenhagen's downtown, this is not a rural commune tucked away from bustling city-life; Christiania is open and integrated with the Danish "green" capital. The quarrels with the government over the years have gained attention, many centered on (1) their tolerated hash market, located on just one of their streets (Pusher Street); and (2) the legitimacy and 'normalisation' of the squat. These quarrels have been well documented and brightened with anecdotes of Christiania's artist and musician scene and unique architecture (see Thörn *et al*. *Space for Urban Alternatives;* Hellstrom's *Steal this place – the aesthetics of tactical formlessness and "the free town of Christiania";* or from a local perspective *The Christiania Guide*). Therefore, I will not provide a thorough history here; I will instead place historical anecdotes where necessary and discuss their most recent purchase of the land that is missing from these accounts. This context will be important for understanding why they have rejected the City's proposed bicycle path.

In 1969, before the founding of Christiania, police demolished Sophiegaarden (a nearby squatted building), and a large cultural event in Thy (similar to Woodstock) drew Danish attention to radical counter culture movements. Thus, Christiania did not arise in 1971 as a random occurrence; the opportunity was taken to start an autonomous society 'from scratch.' Their ideology rests on consensus democracy practices and social activism. They have communicated through oral laws, a local radio station and a weekly newspaper *Ugespejlet*, which still today publishes "practically anything submitted." Christiania's four "unbreakable rules" include "no to hard drugs, rocker badges, weapons and violence" (Christiania Guide, 2005, 1). At first the Danish government offered temporary legalization by creating the Christiania Act which deemed the town a "social experiment." However this acceptance did not last.

Over the years police raids became regular to 'manage' the autonomous area, and by 2004 a new conservative government replaced the Christiania Act with a Christiania Future Plan and a Normalization Plan. Nathan Thornburgh (TIME, 2012) writes "the process has been given the bland bureaucratic name of *normalisering* (normalization), a word that seems market-tested to stick in the throats of the proudly abnormal Christianites." This plan used different tactics - coercive, rhetorical and spatial, to privatize Christiania in accordance with the goals of creative city development, a process which would degrade "a social space where one can 'live another way'" according to Christa Amouroux (2009, 122). The plan began with Project Clean Sweep - more police raids and subsequent arrests of hash pushers. Maria Hellstrom (2006, 86) saw more than forceful normalization during this time: "as a representational strategy this implied a shift from a rhetoric of normalization to a rhetoric of naturalization, where landscape functioned as a masking device, rendering invisible the alternative spatial narratives of the city as enacted by Christiania."

In 2012 the Normalization Plan ended with an ultimatum where Christiania was to either purchase the land, or forfeit the land and the government would sell it to developers (Christiania is located in the downtown of Copenhagen with potentially high market values). Using their consensus democracy structure, Christiania's decision took several years, as purchasing land contradicts the community's belief that no one should own land, yet they did not want to see it "dipped in concrete" with the latter option. During the decision making process, locals closed the gates to Christiania for one week to demonstrate what the area would look like if it were privatized with "fences and fees" (Manghezi, 2012), already signifying a tension with their insistency to remain open to the world. Alessandro Coppola and Alberto Vanolo (2015) analyzed this agreement, finding that it represents a turning point in the town's autonomy, as it creates new and notably long term institutional linkages with the state. As this long and protracted negotiating process may indicate, the residents' perspectives on this agreement vary. One in particular described the situation to me as "it's like the government puts a pistol to our head," with little room for negotiation, especially considering that Christiania took this case to Danish court and lost several times.

Christiania's final decision in 2012 was to set up a fund where anyone can donate to the town's efforts to purchase the land and in return, the donor receives a purely symbolic *folkeaktie* (peoples share) of the land. The community did not have such savings to buy the land (85 million DKK), so a share office has been established at the town's entrance, displaying a world map as colorful pushpins span the globe of 'shareholders.' In his Tedx talk about the matter, resident Risenga Manghezi (2012) asserted that "you can't own this place, it belongs to everybody." He also discussed certain freedoms that arise in Christiania because of their values, which I will discuss further in this article. Manghezi (2012) said that the freedom to express yourself (consensus democracy), freedom to be (artistic expression, lack of material values), and the freedom to take your time (instead of a fast paced lifestyle) – all allow for "creative and unexpected solutions," such as this hybrid decision – to purchase the land but in a way that no one would own it.

Each *folkeaktie* proudly states: "buy the Freetown free" and "worth more than money." On their website they write that

> the agreement and the construction of the new fund ensures that housing in Christiania remains free of speculation in the future, the way it should be… [the shares] promote community, sharing and autonomy in contrast to the financial speculation currently causing great harm to communities all over the world. In this, it is our modest hope to inspire the development of social models of investment, that value common wealth rather than profits. (Christiania Folkeaktie)

This decision represents an alternative structure to housing policies and land privatization, while portraying it as a local solution to an injustice felt globally. The

statement contrasts community and autonomy with speculation and profits. The shares add to the complexity of their "fractured autonomy", in a way that seeks to diffuse the state control that this agreement represents.

Margerit Mayer's (2007, 97) description of how urban neoliberal contestations may function captures part of Christiania's hybrid essence: "the radical and imaginative inner-city actions are frequently only short-term types of protest, emphasize creativity more than resistance, and thus often remain ambiguously stuck between protest and carnival." Alberto Vanolo (2012) has explored this creativity – comparing the typical neoliberal creative city ideas expressed in Copenhagen, with a different form and purpose of creativity expressed in Christiania. For urban neoliberalism, creativity is only important when it can spur innovation, draw in investment and function in the market. However, especially considering Christiania's prime downtown location, the community can never be completely separated from the current hegemonic system and compromises have been made, such as the land agreement (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015; Vanolo 2012).

Regarding Christiania's status as an unintentional eco-village, I should note that Christiania did eventually devise an area plan that focused on the environment (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991). This plan did not emerge from self-interest, but in contest to the government's local plan at the time, where Christianites did not feel properly represented (Hellstrom, 2006). In particular the government's plan created a clear division between the urban and rural parts of Christiania, and so through The Green Plan, Christiania reasserted their autonomy, especially their attempt to merge urban and rural living: "we wish the town out in the countryside and the countryside in the town, not mashed into one porridge, but as changing areas – lovely, roomy, and full of nice surprises." (Christiania, The Green Plan, 1991)

According to Robert Gilman (1991) the goal for an eco-village is minimal environmental harm, with a long term commitment, as they should be "successfully continued into the indefinite future." Gilman's requirements do not exactly reflect a squatter's manifesto, and the Freetown's population exceeds that of his recommended 500 inhabitants. Further, he explains that an eco-village should not have unsustainable ties, that it should not depend on "capital accumulated in other parts of the society; or [be] dependent on unsustainable activities elsewhere," – I would argue that given its downtown locality, Christiania does indeed benefit from Copenhagen's consumerism and notably, tourism.

I met young activists who were "pissed off" about Christiania's lack of progressiveness today – with fast food catering to tourists and compromises with the government. Others countered with asking "how radical can one place be?" I see the many hybrid notions of Christiania to temporally interfere with Gilman's (1991) position that an eco-village is one that can (or at least, is planned to) last into the "indefinite future." While I certainly agree with Maria Hellstrom's (2006)

view of Christiania as a *spatial/cultural jam*; I experienced Christiania as an exhausted space socially. The founders have aged and settled with children, without the possibility to house a growing population, the existing population was fatigued from government confrontations and practicing of consensus democracy. A worker for the Gardner Gruppe told me that this practice is "exhausting and time consuming." He meets with the 14 neighborhoods to discuss proposed landscape changes – thus many trees in Christiania have had their existence thoroughly debated.

Alternative Imaginaries and Practices

Christiania's "practices create a parallel society that is critical of 'the Danish way of life'... [and for some] a place to create a new society that would offer a counter example to the consumerism they saw in Danish society" (Amouroux, 2009, 112). This section will discuss how neoliberal consumer culture is at times contested in Christiania through several socio-spatial imaginaries and associated practices as summarized in Table 1 below. Various trajectories are used, mostly through disengagement and alternative knowledge production, and at times engagement with local authorities is required, and opposition is shown through specific events that often target perceived global injustices. Through this analysis we can see how Christiania as an institution functions, how it has created an alternative urban space that has been termed an 'eco-village', and the implications for environmental sustainability in cities.

Table 1: Examples of Christiania's Neoliberal Contestations

Alternative Imaginaries	Practices
"No mental or physical pollution"	No advertising; prioritize nature trails; reuse materials; no hard drugs or crime; car free
Anti-market and anti-private property	Collective ownership
"Do it yourself", self-sufficiency, responsibility	Residents maintain their homes; sharing
Consensus decision making (equality)	Flat structure, community meetings
Self-expression (freedom)	Art, music, creative space, no housing regulations

Limiting mental and physical pollution was a focus for the founders, taking issue with a variety of societal conventions. This idea is practiced through their regulation of space. Alberto Vanolo (2012, 1794, 1792) writes that "it is important to note that there are no official activities aimed at attracting people: for example,

there are no hotels and no city marketing initiatives" and there is a "lack of pressure for consumption and commodification." Product advertising is prohibited (there are no billboards telling you what to buy), nor do they allow hard drugs, weapons or violence (without Danish police, locals rely on community policing). Christiania a car-free town; however, you may see a construction vehicles or garbage trucks that have special permission. Today some residents do own cars that are parked nearby, with cycling or walking as the methods of transport within the town. Many building materials in Christiania are reused, for example the Green Hall originally stored materials collected from demolition sites in Copenhagen (see Figures 3 and 4 below).

Figure 3: The Green Hall; Figure 4: Windows for sale inside the Green Hall

Perhaps the most deliberate contestation of neoliberal logic, and one that the local authorities have resisted, lies in Christiania's anti-market and anti-private property stance. The alternative practices relate to how they manage the physical land and homes. Residents in Christiania do not own their homes, they do not buy or sell them either. They do not have land plots to decide who owns the space around the homes. The well-maintained nature trails have been preserved over the decades, in part due to this value, as the trails run close to the residents' homes. Today the rent prices are split in half – everyone pays the same flat fee plus a certain amount per square meter of their home. This goes to the common purse, which pays VAT to the Danish government, and supports the many Christiania institutions, the landscaping (maintained by the Gardner Gruppe) and utilities. Most of the businesses are collectively run and also pay a fee. The homes range from single homes that were self-built, to collective housing in old military buildings; amenities also vary, some living in simple conditions without toilets or showers while others have created rather modern living arrangements.

One may predict that residents would not maintain their homes properly without the incentive to buy or sell them, and without strict regulations on housing standards. This is countered through an underlying, anarchist value of self-

sufficiency where one is held responsible to the community and expected to maintain their home. Lacking government run public works, one learns to fix things in Christiania. I experienced an entire gamut of "do-it-yourself" projects, from fixing a bike tire to removing an impeding outdoor cement wall at the CRIR house to make space for enlarging a Mælkebøtten heating system. If you interview to live in Christiania, the neighborhood residents will ask if you are capable of maintaining your home and whether you will participate in local decision making. The values of ownership play out differently in Christiania, and more examples of sharing resources and collective businesses can be found here. The competitive logic of neoliberalism is replaced with cooperation and sharing. Physical tools are shared with their accompanying knowledge.

The final two imaginaries, equality and freedom, can be seen in the recent land purchase example. Equality is presented as another underlying value in Christiania, where everyone has an equal voice and decisions are not made unless they arrive at a consensus at a town hall meeting. They do not vote and they do not have a mayor or president. As Alberto Vanolo (2012) has explored, creativity and artistic expression is embraced in Christiania, regardless of whether or not it is profitable. There is a constant flow of musicians at the concert venues and artist exhibitions at the free gallery. There are no housing regulations that seek to standardize the buildings. This has resulted in a certain display and embrace of diversity.

These alternative socio-spatial ideas and practices primarily display an attempt to disengage with neoliberal society, the practice of such varies for individual Christianites, and for the community as they face tensions and require negotiations, especially with the state. Helen Jarvis (2011, 158) explains that "a significant but neglected story of the countercultural movement that inspired Christiania was distaste for the emphasis on privacy and personal attachment to material possessions attributed to the conventional Western nuclear family and home." I experienced this change when I moved from Christiania to Vesterbro, a Copenhagen neighborhood currently in the midst of a transformation from 'red light' and meatpacking district to trendy and hip. In Christiania I built a relationship with my neighbors; we shared resources, from space to laundry machines to bicycles and books. In Vesterbro I asked my flat mate about the apartment building's empty laundry room (accessible only for residents in the building); he explained that now everyone has their own washer and dryer, and that it was too inconvenient to take the elevator to the ground floor. It was not my goal to measure energy use in Christiania, although I can say that I did not see any dryers or elevators. A physical remnant of Christiania's aversion to privatizing space is town's nature trails which run so close to the homes that one can view inside. What allows for the nature trails is the understanding that the land is for the benefit of public use, rather than private allotments for each home. The following section focuses on a contestation over the use of these trails.

Seeing Like a Squat

This section puts the aforementioned values and practices in context with Copenhagen's form of urban politics, and shows how Christiania directly contests with state actors on defining sustainability. The Danish capital has built an international reputation for its green policies and is often ranked among the world's most sustainable and livable cities. An often-cited reason for this is the culture of and infrastructure for cycling as a mode of transportation. Along with their 'carbon neutral' goal, the city has a specific goal of becoming the 'world's best cycling city,' and plan to expand upon their infrastructure. Christianshavnruten, a route proposed in 2008, has met resistance in Christiania and the surrounding neighborhood, Christianshavn.[2]

The uneven dirt paths in Christiania are an everyday reminder that life is deliberately slow-paced here. The natural setting has been preferred over a frictionless and ultra-convenient mobility. During my research stay, a local mentioned that the City wanted to put a cycle path through the town; however the notion seemed so preposterous to me that I did not take it seriously, until I saw banners hanging around Dyssebroen (see Figures 4, 5 and 6). This bridge connects the two segments of Christiania on either side of the canal and is a popular hang-out area when the sun is shining.

Figure 4: Dyssebroen and the Christiania Flag

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[2] This section builds upon what I have written in a blog post titled 'Space for Cycling Politics? Local Resistance in the World's Best Cycling City' for the *EcoUrbanism Worldwide* website.

Figure 5: Banners hung in protest over the proposed bicycle path: 'There is just no space for communal cycling politics.'

Figure 6: Banners hung in protest over the proposed bicycle path: 'Thanks but no thanks for the cycle route. Look out: quiet, slow, children, horses.'

The construction of Christianshavnruten has been delayed for years, marked not only by the community resistance but also by the bankruptcy of the construction company set to build the proposed bridge needed for this route, Inderhavnsbroen. The proposal (Figure 7) below shows how the route, open to Amager's 150,000 residents, would cut through Christiania and connect Christianshavn to the popular Nyhavn harbor area.
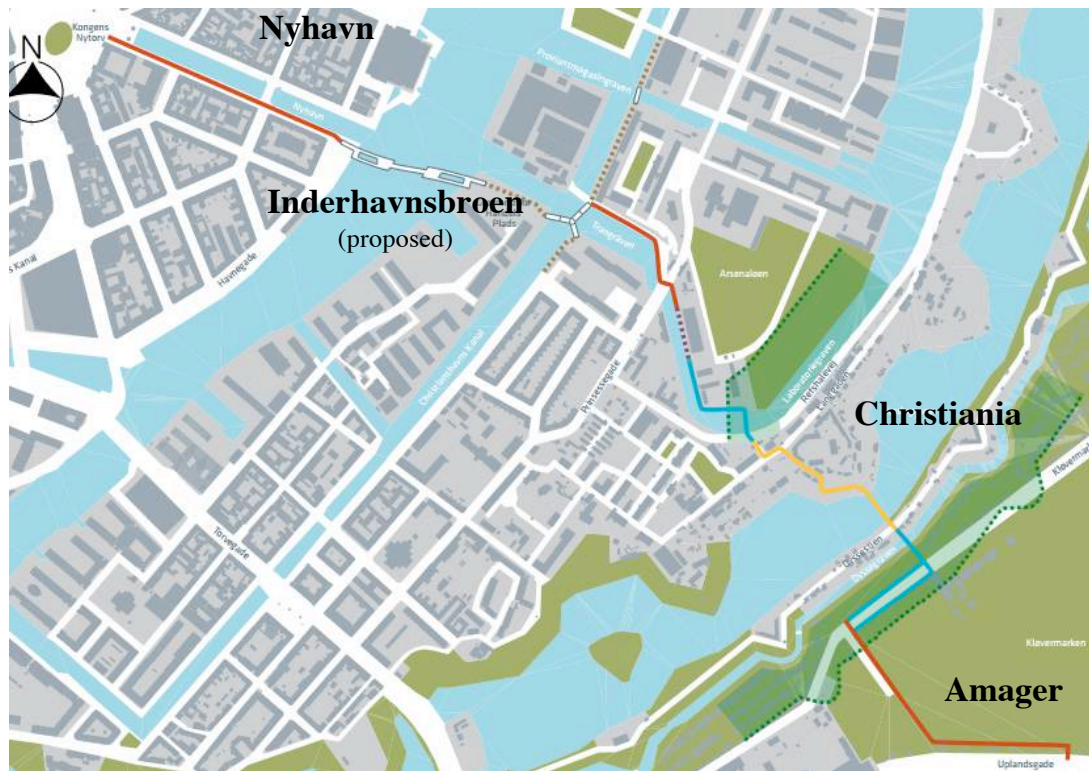
Figure 7: Christianshavnsruten (City of Copenhagen 2014)

The City has argued that the route will provide a connection for Amager (the island south of Christianshavn) residents to downtown Copenhagen, increase the cycling modal share and help the city reach its goal of becoming the world's first carbon neutral capital by 2025. Christiania has responded that it does not need a bicycle path. The town has maintained a car-free atmosphere and most people get around by foot or bike (including the popular Christiania bike). Expressing concern for the safety of local residents, animals and tourists (often on group tours), they claim the path is unsuitable for use as a bicycle superhighway with heavy traffic. The local Christianshavn council has aligned with Christiania residents on these safety issues as well as the preservation of the landscape. While local residents argued that the project should invoke a formal environmental impact review, the City determined this would not be necessary. The City's response to the residents' safety concerns is that they worry most for the safety of the cycle route construction workers, as they fear protests (Wenande, 2013). Christiania residents

and local council members devised and presented alternative routes to the City. Nevertheless, the original plan remains. Christiania and the local council have worked together and recently (October 2014), hosting a demonstration in the form of a walk-through of the congested area of the proposed route. A member of the local council explained that she was not against cycling per se, when I asked about Christianshavnruten:

> I have been very much occupied with the bicycle 'road' through Christianshavn and Christiania, especially because it is a totally 'non-functional' route, but forced through our part of Copenhagen by the politicians without listening to the experiences of the inhabitants. It is at pity, because most people here want to promote bicycling but not in this way!

In the recent cycling strategy (2011, 19), the City boasts about the quality and safety of their cycling lanes: "you can ride around most of the city with a cup of coffee on the handlebars." Cycling is a common transport practice, often viewed as "authentic and Danish" (Jensen, 2013, 222; see also Freudendal-Pedersen, 2015). However this does not seem to be the top concern for Christiania residents and the local council. What is most *sustainable* to local residents is the preservation of their autonomous space as calm and peaceful, a place where children and adults can play. This dilemma demonstrates that what is deemed to be green by the city is perceived as detrimental to those living in and around Christiania. As Andrew Jonas *et al*. (2011, 2543) explain, 'carbon control' results in a focus on the "relationship between urban infrastructure and carbon flows"; here it further excludes Christianites as 'others' that are not 'normal' (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015; Amouroux, 2009).

An underlying reason for Christiania to oppose this route can be understood within the context of the land purchasing agreement that I explained in the beginning of this article – their autonomy was somewhat forfeited in this way. Christianshavnruten, as a carbon control infrastructure mechanism put forth via the state, poses an additional threat to Christiania's autonomy, which at this time is already in a "fractured" condition. Unlike the agreement which spans scales (Coppola and Vanolo, 2015), the bicycle path represents a physical connection that would place a smooth and planned path through Christiania's bumpy and 'natural' dirt trails of which they take pride in. The esteemed trails are part of the reason Christiania deems itself as "the green lungs of Copenhagen"; the bicycle path would then sever this lung.

John Urry's (2007) work on mobilities reminds us that the bicycle can and has been seen as a symbol of autonomy for an individual; and Malene Freudendal-Pedersen (2015) writes of the possibilities for creating a 'community of cyclists' as a way to achieve the right to city spaces, that has yet to be fully achieved in Copenhagen. However in this case Christiania's locally experienced autonomy is collateral damage in Copenhagen's bid for international success in the green urban

arena. Christiania is caught within Copenhagen's carbon control, as part of their 'green' identity. Anne Jensen (2013, 224) analyzed Copenhagen's cycling policies, finding subtle borders drawn around their particular imagined mobile subjects, which are then "inserted in building an urban Copenhagen identity intended to place the spotlight on the city on the 'global catwalk' while a range of subjectivities of the diverse city is not present." In this case, it is a range of sustainabilities that force negotiations and contestations among these different actors.

Conclusions: Implications for Sustainability

As outlined in this article, the goal for Christiania's alternative values and practices is not to promote 'green' consumption, energy efficiency or strictly reduce carbon emissions. Rather, they sought to create a social atmosphere where respect for people generates respect for the environment, thus the case of Christiania presents an anomaly to some conventional ideas (e.g. carbon control) of how to transition to environmental sustainability in cities. The framework used helps to refocus on social aspects of contesting neoliberalism, as it is important to understand the role of cities in the broader political-economic processes in which they are embedded and produced.

Becoming an 'eco-village' was not a plan; rather it was a byproduct of a culture created out of an acceptance and dedication to diversity. Christiania's identity does not hinge on attaining the title of 'greenest squat in the world,' and environmental sustainability is not a part of their discourse. In the spirit of hybridity, I do not claim that Christiania is a sustainable best practice either (see also Mason, 2013). Christiania has dirt roads, old homes and shacks, lacking the gardens and solar panels one may expect from an 'eco-village,' highlighting the level of plurality we could begin to work with in sustainability talks when we think outside of the neoliberal box.

Many have previously labeled this space as a refuge, and I would add that Christiania is a refuge for the people, animals, materials, and land that neoliberal society would have otherwise discarded. The population of poor, mentally ill, political refugees, and those not wanting to contribute to growing GDP found a different life in Christiania. Risenga Manghezi (2012) explained that when Christiania temporarily closed

> what was most disheartening was to see Copenhagen's homeless and socially challenged people that we had to turn away. They come to our community every day because they can find someone to talk to or because they can find a place where they can sit around without anybody passing judgment on them... they come to our community to feel free.

A resident explained how refuge seeking animals and birds are displaced from "development" projects in the area, as well as from the increased use of chemicals in large agriculture farms in the Danish countryside. The building and art materials that are reused in Christiania were once destined for the incinerator. Finally, the land itself was discarded, the abandoned military barracks that was toxified through weapons testing, later discarded and locked up – Christianites have resisted this commodification of land. This history and current political ecology, for example the surrounding urban development and industrial agriculture which pollute their air and water, prevent locals from deeming Christiania as "environmentally sustainable."

If sustainability involves being inclusive and accepting of diversity then Helen Jarvis (2011, 179) makes an important case that "Christiania is home to far greater variety of dwelling types, fluid families and diverse practices of home-making than would ever be possible in mainstream urban society today." Maria Hellstrom (2006, 90) writes that Christiania offers a "powerful reminder of a problem which is not merely one of planning but one of democracy in the wider sense, namely the necessity of developing new inter-disciplinary and action-oriented spatial practices capable of engaging a larger number of citizens." These values and practices aim to preserve Christiania as an open and diverse space.

Without a concept of environmental sustainability or strict physical planning techniques, there are many temporal and intentional differences between Christiania and Copenhagen (or many western cities and eco-villages for that matter). Sustainability discussions rest on long-term thinking and subsequent responsibility for future generations. There has been a short term perspective in Christiania, one reflective of a typical squat; they have not planned extensively for their future, as they have been consumed by fighting for their short term existence. Residents have been more concerned with their immediate daily lives and what kind of community they are creating, than a 50 year sustainability plan. However we should not romanticize Christiania either. The community is not without internal issues and now has an aging population; the activists from the 1970s have settled down, the spirit seems exhausted after decades of struggle. Documenting the political struggles between Copenhagen reaching international status as a 'carbon neutral capital' and Christiania maintaining their autonomy allowed for reflection on the temporal and socio-spatial aspects of these different articulations of urban sustainability.

Acknowledgements

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